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SUCCESS STORY

On the Road to Progress

Nearly 30,000 Rwandan teachers learn their English levels and set goals for improvement.



Minister of State for Primary and Secondary Education distributes tests to teachers in Nyagatare district.

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In Rwanda, adapting to English as the language of instruction is a challenge, but teachers are willing and eager to learn. Through the Rwanda Education Board (REB)'s School-based Mentoring Program, nearly 1,000 senior and school-based mentors are deployed country-wide to support them.

To be effective, mentors need to know teachers' English levels and specific training needs. This is why REB, with the support of USAID, has developed an English language diagnostic test for teachers.

This year from February 10-28th, mentors tested 29,466 primary and secondary teachers across the country.

The test is part of the Rwandan English Proficiency Standards for teachers (REPS) system, based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). In February, mentors used the basic user test, targeting teachers with lower levels of English so that their support can reach the teachers who need it most. As a result, teachers were given their working English language level as well as a target level.

"The test made me know well my level in English," said primary six teacher Sebantu Mataratara. "After getting our results about it, it encouraged me so much."

At the end of the academic year, teachers will take a second test to monitor their progress towards their goals. In the testing process, it is not a single set of scores that is important, but rather the improvement of scores over time. The test is meant to motivate teachers by showing their progression through levels.

To help teachers make progress, mentors provide targeted training. From the test results, school-based mentor Gerald Mbonabucya identified key training priorities for the teachers he works with. "I have seen that our teachers need speaking [practice] and more vocabulary," he said. "Many of them are willing to work."

Mentors are equipped with print and audio materials, loaded on netbook computers, as well as projectors for delivering training. The English for Rwandan Teachers resource bank contains activities organized by REPS levels to ensure that teachers are getting the support they need.

"I'm very confident about my performance, my improvement," said Mataratara. "At the end of the year, I will know more than I know today."